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James Bond Could

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Have Learned From Philby

For 30 years before he skipped to Russia in 1963, Britain's upper-crust agent H. A. Philby lived one of the most successful—and treacherous—lies in all spydom, and London hasn't recovered yet.

LONDON.

IN January, 1963, Harold Adrian Philby, known to all as "Kim," disappeared from Beirut, where he was working as a correspondent of two British weeklies, The Observer and The Economist. Soon afterward, Edward Heath, then the Government spokesman, announced in answer to a question in the House of Commons that Kim had skipped to the Soviet Union. He added that, contrary to what his fellow spokesman Harold Macmillan had said in 1955, Kim was indeed the "third man" who had tipped off his fellow traitors Donald Maclean and Guy Burgess in 1951, enabling them, too, to defect to Russia.

It was only about a year ago that bits and pieces of evidence began to add up. The clean escape of still another traitor, George Blake, from Wormwood Scrubs Prison in London in 1966 had been a pointer. Eleanor Philby, Kim's last wife in the West, was now separated from him and ready to talk. It looked as if we had underrated his importance as a double agent. The Sunday Times of London started a worldwide investigation and hired me as consultant. Our report has appeared over the last month and has startled many people in the United States as well as Britain.

To judge from Foreign Secretary George Brown's antics at the Savoy Hotel on Nov. 1, it has startled him. So it's worth saying—contrary to Mr. Brown's assertion then to The Sunday Times' publisher and other owners that the report "helped the Russians"—that it contained nothing which the Communists did not know already, though it probably had the salutary effect of showing them that we knew more about their subversion than they suspected. On the other hand, it told the public in the West,

who are not babies, some serious facts of life which they have every right to know and to judge themselves. Of course, the authorities would have preferred to continue to live a quiet life with those facts under the carpet, where they had lain for so long.

My Foreign Office duties in the nineteen-fifties and early sixties had placed me fairly and squarely in the middle of the Anglo-American intelligence community. For some years I chaired the Joint Intelligence Committee, which included representatives of our intelligence departments. Sir Patrick Dean, now British Ambassador in Washington, was my immediate boss. Representatives of the C.I.A. sat in on our meetings, and in return the representative of the British Secret Intelligence Service, otherwise called MI6, was right in on the American intelligence setup in Washington. Philby had been that man from 1949 to 1951. In 1956, I became Foreign Office adviser to the chief of the S.I.S., Sir Dick White. This, as we shall see, was another crucial year for Philby.

As a result of my position I was less bewildered than some by those chilling developments. I knew from experience that deception was one of the cardinal principles of espionage. Many of my best friends were spies—but spies in their own countries' interest.

While the public at large was stunned by the news, the authorities were clammng up. But portentous questions remained. Could this highly respected member of MI6 really have been a Communist agent at the same time? If so, for how long? What about security? How did he get away with it in 1951, when the C.I.A. and the F.B.I. as well as his own service were hot on his trail? Finally, what inspired a cultivated member of the

By GEOFFREY McDERMOTT

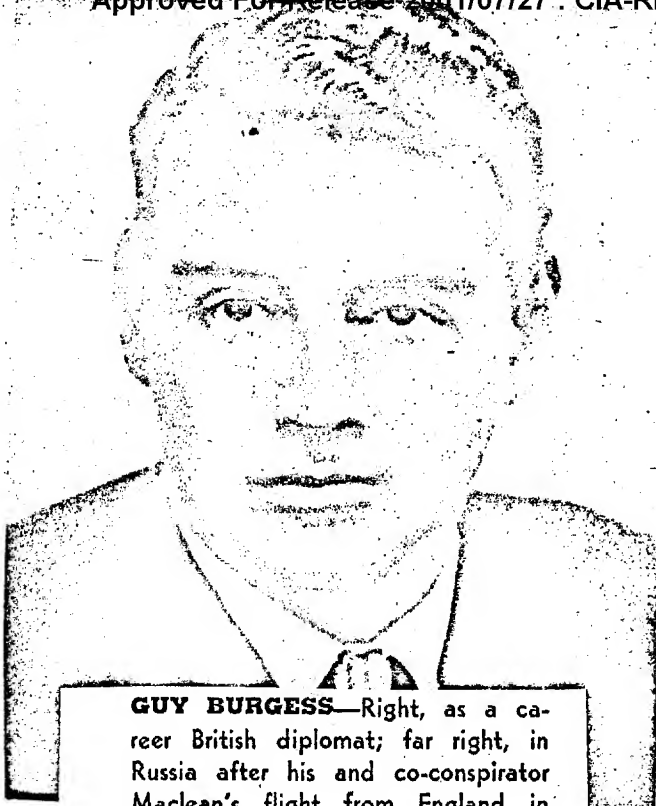
British upper classes to do this brutally disruptive thing? It all made James Bond look like a milksop and his exploits like small beer.

As with all of us, Kim's parents and upbringing provide some clues. His father, St. John Philby, a scholar of a top British school, Westminster, and of Cambridge University, as Kim was also, began life as a conventional member of the Indian Civil Service. Kim was born in India in 1912. But St. John became decidedly eccentric as time went on. When I first met him in Cairo in 1946 he had become the personal adviser of King Ibn Saud and a Moslem. He had been briefly interned in Britain during the war on grounds of doubtful loyalty, and lived by preference in Saudi Arabia. His normal-looking English wife told me that she was quite happy to put on the veil and live in the harem. I heard old St. John tell his son that he must always carry through to the bitter end whatever he thought right. Kim has certainly done that, and surpassed his father in outrageousness into the bargain.

I WAS at Cambridge in the early thirties with Philby, Maclean and Burgess—what a mob!—though I met them only when I was a diplomat in later years and then only casually. Looking back, I can see, with an effort, how the atmosphere at the university could lead to pro-Communism among some intellectuals. British society then was stuffy and conservative. The ruling Tory party was both pompous and ineffectual; the Labor party just plain ineffectual. Hitler had appeared and no one was doing anything about him. War was on the way and only the Communists seemed really interested in averting it. Consequently, a good few intellectuals turned to the extreme left,

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GUY BURGESS—Right, as a career British diplomat; far right, in Russia after his and co-conspirator Maclean's flight from England in 1951. Philby first came under suspicion as the "third man" in that widely publicized episode.



HAROLD ADRIAN PHILBY—Right, the man who once headed the counterespionage section of British Intelligence, in London in the early fifties; far right, a photo of Philby made by his son John this September



in Moscow, where he now holds an important post in Soviet Intelligence.

without, of course, troubling to see how far the Soviet Union justified their idealistic hopes. Few turned toward the United States because, again out of ignorance, they tended to consider it remote from European affairs, brash and over-rich.

Most of these men, having "gone Communist" in greater or lesser degree, had the good sense to turn away again, but not Philby. He became not merely a Communist but a carefully controlled Communist intelligence agent in 1933, while still at Cambridge. Thus, from the age of 21, his life was wholly dedicated to two things: passing on to his Moscow masters as much valuable information as possible about Britain and the United States, and deceiving his friends and colleagues in doing so. It is difficult to say which gave him more pleasure.

In other words, for 30 long years, Philby lived a lie every moment of the day and night. He married four wives; he produced five children; he had plenty of mistresses; he drank like a fish. He was handsome, socially easy. The only outward sign of strain was a stammer, which varied in intensity and which some girls found attractive. In all this career of duplicity, he slipped only three times, and in different ways he got away with it each time.

PHILBY'S first assignment after Cambridge was, typically, to appear to be a pro-Nazi. He went into journalism and, like many British enthusiasts, rushed off to cover the Civil War in Spain, but with a difference from most of his friends—for he went to the Franco side for The London Times and earned a Fascist decoration for his devotion to duty. This was no mean beginning for a young double agent.

Like Maclean and Burgess, Philby found no difficulty in avoiding the call-up. A lot could be done through influential friends in those days. He had a spell with the British Expeditionary Force in France as The Times war correspondent, and returned to Britain in 1940 with the remnants of that force. Now the big stuff really began.

The Soviet Secret Service already had their agent in the British Diplomatic Service in

the shape of Maclean. He was coming along well. Burgess was buzzing about around the edges of the B.B.C. (where he was able to influence the content of a series of news commentaries) and the F.O. (Foreign Office). What better than to plant their ablest man of all, Philby, at the very center—in the British Secret Intelligence Service itself.

That service had existed for some time, but in a highly amateurish way. Its heads were by tradition retired members of the fighting forces, of less than the highest caliber. (This tradition has, thank God, been discontinued over the last 10 years.) Its members were recruited in the "old boy net." The head of the service at the time was a retired major general who was a member of White's, one of the most Old-World clubs in London's Old-World St. James's. He and one or two other close cronies would discuss possible recruits over the claret, port and cigars. They all agreed that, provided a man came from a good family, school and university like themselves, he was to be trusted. Not so the lesser breeds. And you couldn't be quite sure of the clever ones.

Consequently, not all the recruits in those days were as bright as they might have been. Philby was of the right social background, presentable, highly intelligent but not a long-haired chap. He liked his drink and knew how to hold it. He admitted to the youthful follies of having been both a Nazi and a Communist sympathizer. Of course, he said, those days were over. So the youthful excesses were laughed off and it was reckoned to his credit that he had come clean about them. Security was considered a bit of a bind anyway while there were urgent clandestine matters to be done. Kim was welcomed with open arms.

HE flourished. As soon as the Soviet Union became our ally in June, 1941, matters were even easier for him than before. He took a hand in organizing the Special Operations Executive (S.O.E.) branch of the S.I.S., a lot of swashbuckling amateurs who went around blowing things up and helping to organize re-

sistance movements in Europe. In setting up the American Office of Strategic Services under the well-named Gen. "Wild Bill" Donovan. This developed after the war into the mighty Central Intelligence Agency. Thus he was in on the ground floor of not only the British but also the American espionage organization.

When the United States came into the war, all was apparently sweetness and light between the Western and Eastern Allies in the anti-Hitler coalition. But it did not take the Soviet Government long to judge, correctly, that its most dangerous enemies in the long run would be its Allies of the moment, the Americans. Philby had a particular dislike of American power and material success, and he was delighted to be told by Moscow to step up his spying on them. Then, by a combination of luck inside the S.I.S. and judgment by Philby, the perfect opportunity for his double game was afforded him. The British on their side realized that they were in for a long tussle with the Soviet Government. In 1944 they set up a powerful counterespionage section to keep a sharp eye on their Communist Allies. You can guess who was appointed head of it.

PHILBY now had it really made. As head of this department it was his duty to see all the vital intelligence he could, whether from British, American or other sources. Any interceptions of Soviet intelligence were his business too, and he was responsible for countering all clandestine operations or subversion attempts by the Communists. Since he was, unknown to his British employers and American friends, involved in some of these in his dual role, the central power for evil which he wielded was enormous. Added to this, he of course knew the organization of both the British and American secret services in detail and could betray it to the Russians as it developed from day to

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day. It all sounds almost too bad to be true. It was—almost.

Philby's first slip occurred in August, 1945, over what is known as the Volkov case. A Russian using that name got in touch with the British Embassy in Turkey and offered to defect. He undertook to bring with him a lot of invaluable information on the organization of the Soviet Secret Services and in particular on its agents in British Governmental departments. The case was referred to Philby as head of the counterespionage department, and he was warned of a time limit which the Russian had set. Clearly Volkov was a threat to him and his network. He therefore took action, at a leisurely pace, behind the scenes. By the time he arrived in Turkey, Volkov was no longer, to use a polite word, available. In fact, he had been removed first in a Soviet military aircraft. It struck a colleague of Philby's at the time that either he had been highly incompetent, which was not his habit, or that he had been up to a double game.

But his colleague assumed that MI5, the Security Service, which corresponds roughly to the F.B.I., would be onto that point. They were, but not with much force. No conclusive evidence came to light. Philby got the benefit of the doubt.

The C.I.A. was set up in 1947, and Philby along with his British colleagues were regarded as elder brothers who had helped to advise on its organization. But before going to Washington to compound his treacheries, Philby went in 1946 to be near the land of his masters. He took over the highly important Istanbul station, from where it was his duty to operate not only into the Soviet Union but into the Communist Balkans. He operated there all right, but not quite in the way his head office in London intended. All this time his colleague Maclean was spying away most effectively on the United States atomic secrets from his post in the British Embassy in Washington.

By October, 1949, Philby, though still only 37, was ready

for the top job in the field—by both Western and Communist estimation—the Washington station. Here he was in the most intimate daily contact with the C.I.A. and the F.B.I. The Volkov case was forgotten. He was regarded by the Americans as just about the ablest British operator, and relations between the clandestine organizations were perhaps closer than they had ever been.

EVEN the abject failure of a joint C.I.A.-S.I.S. operation in Albania did not shake his position. In the spring of 1950, after what was considered due preparation, we infiltrated well-armed bands into Albania which, according to our intelligence, was about ready to throw off the Soviet yoke. Success there might have had far-reaching consequences in stimulating unrest throughout Eastern Europe. But there was no question of success. It was a fiasco. The infiltrators were methodically met and slaughtered. About 50 per cent of the force of 300 struggled back into Greece. The C.I.A. man who organized the operation with Philby has no doubt now that treachery was at work, and that the treachery was Philby's. But once again it could not be pinned on him.

Philby's next slip-up finished his great days as a double agent in the West. He was, in a sense, forced into it by his traitor colleagues Maclean and Burgess. Burgess was a grubby homosexual who, amazingly, was appointed to a good post in the British Embassy in Washington when Philby was there. He soon drew unfavorable attention to himself by his stupid behavior. Philby remained friendly with him, in spite of this and of the fact that he was not even an efficient Communist spy. He was soon sent back to London by the Embassy.

Maclean was another kettle of fish. He had procured invaluable atomic information for his Moscow masters, but he cracked under the strain of his double life. In Cairo and later in London his days and nights were a whirl of drunkenness, violence, homosexual-

ity, and so on. MI5 began to keep an eye on him though, astonishingly, he had been given an important post in the F.O.

The time came, in May, 1951, when these two realized that Britain was no longer a healthy place for them. They were tipped off by the "third man" and left at a moment's notice for the Soviet Union. That third man was Philby. Or was he?

The C.I.A. and F.B.I. had no doubts about it. MI5 was practically certain. But his own service, MI6, reacted differently. Dammit, the feller's a gentleman, one of us, was the attitude (it overlooked the fact that Maclean and Burgess came into the same category). Then there was no love lost between 5 and 6, rather as is the case sometimes between the C.I.A. and the F.B.I. More, there was strong anti-American feeling in MI6, based mainly on envy of the tremendously increasing power of the C.I.A. Some MI6 men pointed out irrelevantly that the United States was not blameless in the matter of spawning traitors. Finally, Philby's defenders asserted that he was a victim of McCarthyism.

Philby was recalled from Washington and interrogated by his service and MI5. His tactics were to sit tight and keep mum. A friend of mine who knew him well said that he almost drove his interrogators up the wall by his obstinate silence. This same friend, who kept in touch with him right up to his defection, said that until Philby's own confession at the end of 1962 he could not believe what proved to be the truth. He commented that, while he liked Philby and admired his professional skill, he was never sure what made him tick. My friend was not alone in this.

From my few meetings with him in the Middle East in the forties and fifties I remember an apparently normal member of the British upper class—amusing, intelligent, good-looking. He always drank more than he should; so did a good many other people in diplomatic circles. I never found his stammer obtrusive.

Perhaps he was in a relaxed mood on these particular occasions. Like many others who knew him far better than I did, I noticed absolutely nothing suspicious about him.

Philby had to be removed from the S.I.S., but no more stringent measures were taken against him, because the case was "not proved." This point was made in statements in the House of Commons. I was able to see for myself that, happily, close collaboration in the intelligence sphere between Americans and the British was resumed.

In the twilight years that followed 1951, Philby lived, poorly, on odd bits of journalism or anything else that came his way. Most of his British friends remained faithful to him and helped him as and when they could. He continued to drink and wench as much as he could afford to. The charm remained. MI5 watched him, and he watched them watching him. Clearly his Moscow masters were in touch with him and instructed him to play it quietly. He has since said that, chafing at the inaction after the days of splendor, he longed to finish it and go to Moscow. But his orders were to stay.

In 1955 he got another lucky break. These happened so often in his life that we may well suppose there was some Communist-inspired manipulation behind the scenes. A Labor M.P., Marcus Lipton, stated in the House of Commons that he had firm evidence that Philby had indeed been the "third man" and he asked then Foreign Secretary Harold Macmillan: What about it? Macmillan, after consulting his F.O. and S.I.S. advisers, replied that it was nonsense. Lipton claimed that he had his information from "a security source," which suggests MI5. The question here would seem to be: Who was fooling whom?

The F.O. evidently thought that the poor fellow had been

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hardly done by. So they now gave him semiofficial backing in getting the Middle East correspondent's job on The Observer and The Economist. Centered in Beirut, he could travel widely and make useful, to him, Communist contacts all over that part of the world. Shortly after this, Sir Dick White became head of S.I.S. As head of MI5 he had had grave suspicions of Philby's loyalty. He decided to make the most of a bad job and gave him some small assignments in the hope that he would betray himself through his conduct of these operations. I became Foreign Office adviser to White later in 1956. I can confirm that Philby never tripped up.

In his spare time he seduced and married the American wife of an American journalist who was a close friend. His father, St. John, robust as ever in his 70's, visited Beirut and father and son had some lively parties together. However, the nightclubs finally proved too much for the old chap, and he died, uttering the memorable words: "I'm bored." His son was shattered by his death.

YET another traitor enters the Philby story at this point. George Blake, who had doubtless been under Philby's control in the good old days when he was riding high, had done his diabolical work as S.I.S. man and double agent in Berlin from 1954 till 1959, and he felt he deserved a rest. So did his grateful but unwitting head office in London and they sent him to M.E.C.A.S. (the Middle East Center for Arab Studies) just outside Beirut. Naturally, his equally grateful but by no means unwitting other head office, in Moscow, had no objection at all to his getting together with his fellow traitor once more.

It was not for long. That same year, a contact of Blake's came clean to our side and incriminated him. He was brought to London, where he confessed his guilt. He was sent to prison for 42 years, a record sentence.

Inside prison, he was treated very well, and further interrogated in a gentlemanly way.

At last—it was by now 1962—he slipped up and revealed a piece of information (concerning one of the complex operations in which they were both involved) that pointed indubitably at the truth about Philby.

A personal friend of Philby's

was sent to Beirut in December, 1962, to have it out. Now Philby saw the game was up; perhaps even he felt he had played it long enough. Besides, he was sure he could go where he most wanted to be.

Philby confessed to his still incredulous friend. Among a long list of treacherous acts he confessed to being the "third man" in 1951. Allen Dulles had no doubt of this when he wrote about the matter in 1963. And this is generally accepted. If a lurking doubt still remains it is because Philby's whole life was devoted to deception and parts of his confession could well have been bogus too. He might have been protecting the real "third man" so that he could continue his activities among us.

HAD I been in his interrogator's place I would have felt strongly inclined to slip Philby a Mickey Finn and whip him off to London. But the letter of the law was strictly observed. Philby was still innocent until proved guilty by due judicial process. And it was thought that the Lebanese authorities might have resented firm action of this kind—which I very much doubt. It would, of course, have been useless for his newspapers to summon him back; he would not have obeyed.

And so, taking his time to the last, and deceiving his new wife just as he had deceived the rest of them, Philby made his arrangements to depart. A few weeks later, in January, 1963, he did so, by night on a Soviet ship.

His son John Philby visited him in Moscow last September. He reported that Kim was looking younger and more relaxed. His stammer has gone. True to form, he has removed

Maclean's American wife, Melinda, from him, without bothering to inform his legal wife, Eleanor. This spy has come in from the cold. Or, in Kim's own words, "I have come home."

He has been joined by his colleague in treachery, George Blake, who was easily removed from his London prison by his Communist friends. Kim holds an important position in the K.G.B., the Soviet Security and Intelligence Department. Between them, they should have many more years of activity in the cause to which they have devoted their lives.

One theory is that Philby is now a treble agent, busily penetrating the K.G.B. in the Western cause. It is true that with Philby almost anything is possible. But this, I fear, is wishful thinking. Had it ever been a remote possibility, it would by now have been blown to pieces as a result of speculation about it in the West. I believe what Kim said straight to Eleanor when she went to see him in Moscow in October, 1963: That he had dedicated himself wholly to the Communist cause since his student days and would stick to it rather than to his family. I believe the judgment of a close friend of his who told me Philby did it from "idealism," however grotesque that may seem.

There are all too many signs of disagreement and disruption in the non-Communist world today. Men like Philby and their agents everywhere will be quick to recognize any weakness—human, political, economic—and to exploit it to the full.

The supply of traitors unhappily always seems ample to meet the demand. Since the very future of humanity is involved, it is up to us all to ponder the lessons of the macabre Philby story. ■